

TOPICS & REPORT

Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois



Executive Director's Message



It is the height of the retirement season, and for us, it is the busiest time of the year. For schools across the state, though, it is a time to find individuals to fill the very big shoes of teachers who completed their careers this spring.

Newspapers across the state have recognized a number of retiring teachers with stories that celebrate successful careers. I hope you enjoy these thoughts from

the retirees' own words. Their remarks are universal and represent the heart and soul of the teaching profession.

- "My proudest accomplishment has been and will continue to be realized anytime the students I have worked with become productive, mature, responsible adults."
- "I had been surprised by how much I missed teaching... Sixth, seventh and eighth graders were the perfect age for me... I found their enthusiasm and excitement infectious. They brought out the playful part in me and I've never looked back... The two years that I spent in the private sector were a blessing because it helped me appreciate how lucky I was to get to work with kids."
- "I just feel that building foundations is a very important job a kindergarten teacher has."
- "Over the years I have had many students who have gone on to successful careers in the visual arts. It is a terrific feeling when I get to see them and they have these great memories from high school that they will tell me about, and they say 'thanks for everything.' It makes a teacher feel proud."
- "When you're directing a play or speech and you finally

watch a student get it... It makes what you are doing worthwhile."

- "I encourage students to find a job they love — so it is a pleasure to go to work. It has been a pleasure to work with so many great staff members throughout the years."
- "I guess what I'm really proud of is that when I look at my budget and the facilities and how we treat our programs, I don't think anyone here thinks, 'Oh, that's the girls and that's the boys.' We don't have that mind set. All of our programs are important. They're all our kids."
- "Every year you're blessed with a promising group of young people. You just hope you... help them along the way."
- "I have loved getting to see lots of our kids graduate. I always wanted to end each day knowing that I had done what was best for each child."

To each of our new retirees, best wishes for a happy, rewarding retirement. As always, we stand ready to be of assistance. Have an excellent summer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Bauman".

Jon Bauman
Executive Director

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Retirement Security for Illinois Educators

TRS Appoints Senior Investment Officers

TRS has promoted two staff members to serve as senior investment officers.

Scottie Bevill will supervise the TRS's real return investments in addition to the fixed income portfolio. **Lamar Villere** has been chosen to oversee absolute return investments and the private equity portfolio for TRS.



Scottie has served in various capacities during his 15-year tenure at TRS, most recently as the fixed income investment officer. He earned a Bachelor of Science in economics and business administration from Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, and a Master of Science in economics from the University of Illinois at Springfield.



Lamar has worked as the domestic equities investment officer at TRS since 2005. Previously, he served as vice president and equity analyst at Morgan Keegan & Company, Inc. and as a financial analyst at both HCFP Brenner Securities and at Deutsche Asset Management. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and mass communications from Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, and a Master of Business Administration from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Lamar is a Chartered Financial Analyst.

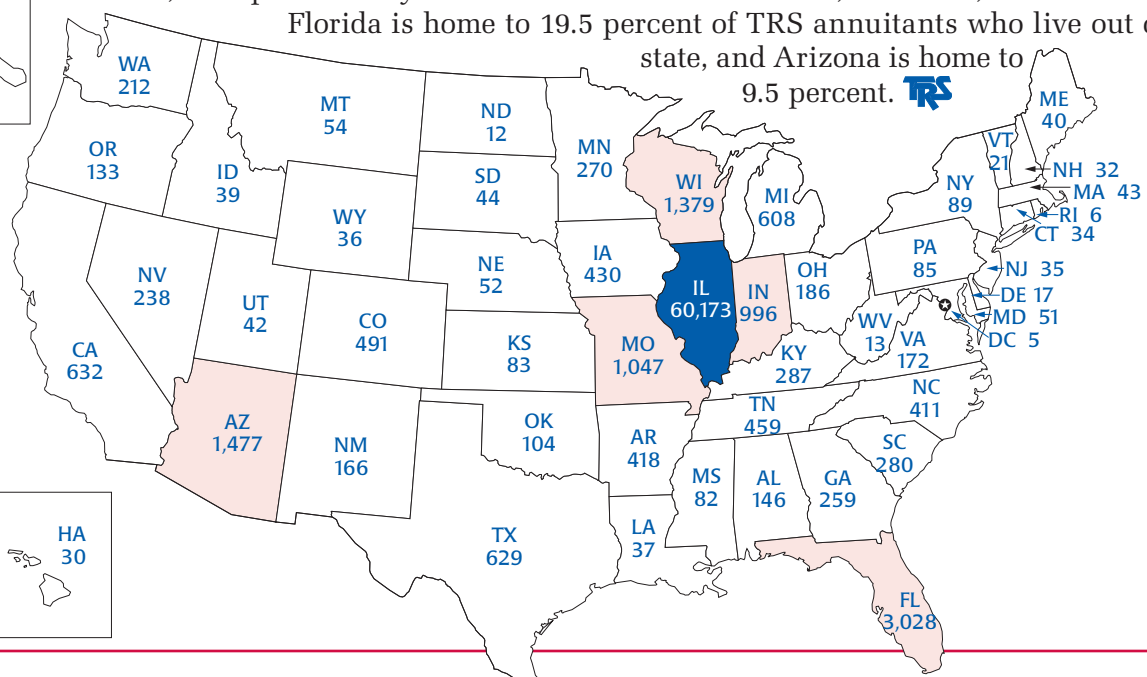
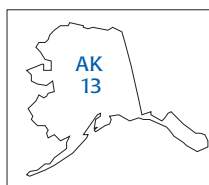
Both assumed their new job duties at the end of May. **TRS**

Legislative Update

As of this printing, the Illinois General Assembly is currently in an extended legislative session. Please check our Web site at trs.illinois.gov for updated information on the budget proposal and pending bills that may affect TRS. **TRS**

Majority of TRS Annuitants Retire in Land of Lincoln

TRS statistics show that Illinois teachers choose Illinois as their retirement home. As of May 31, 2007, 79.5 percent of TRS annuitants reside in Illinois. Of the retirees who moved out of state, 22.0 percent stayed close to home in Wisconsin, Missouri, and Indiana. Florida is home to 19.5 percent of TRS annuitants who live out of state, and Arizona is home to 9.5 percent. **TRS**



New TRS Board of Trustee Appointments



Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) appointed Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D. as the Illinois State Superintendent of Education effective May 1, 2007. The superintendent also serves as the ex officio TRS Board President, which he said, “is an honor and responsibility that I take seriously.”

Dr. Koch was the superintendent in an interim capacity prior to his appointment. He said, “Since my interim appointment, I have made a point to educate myself about the types of issues that TRS faces, how investment decisions are made, and the future that lies ahead for the investments made by and for teachers. It is important that teaching

in Illinois remains an attractive and respected profession. How we approach retirement benefits impacts the continued attractiveness of this profession.”

Dr. Koch has experience as a special educator and is a member of the National Association of Directors of Special Education. He has also served as ISBE’s director of special education and chief education officer.

As a member of TRS and a former teacher, Dr. Koch believes that he brings a balance of teacher and administrator background to the TRS Board. “I know from personal experience as classroom teacher that one of your biggest concerns is your pension, ensuring that the system remains solvent, and that you are able to have enough personal return from TRS to survive during your retirement years. As an administrator, I know the fiscal interests the taxpayers and lawmakers have, and that every dollar must be accounted for to ensure their confidence in the services that we provide,” he said.

Dr. Koch is an Illinois native, graduating from Brown County High School in Mt. Sterling, Illinois, and from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He obtained his master’s and doctoral degrees in educational policy and leadership from George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

He enjoys the outdoors, camping in state and national parks (particularly Illinois state parks), biking, and spending time with his family.



Marcia Boone

Governor Blagojevich appointed Marcia Boone of O’ Fallon, Illinois to the TRS Board of Trustees on March 26.


As the Foundation accounting specialist/board secretary at Southwestern Illinois College, she is responsible for all accounting functions for the Foundation, which has net assets of \$4.1 million. She has also held numerous positions in the college’s business offices since 1983.

Her current occupation requires investment expertise that she will use for TRS’s benefit. “I will work diligently to make sure that the contributions of teachers and their employers gain the best possible returns. My long-term goal is to ensure the stability and viability of this system into the future so the young people entering the teaching profession are secure in the knowledge that TRS will be there for them when they retire,” she said.

A graduate of McKendree College, Marcia earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and business management.

Marcia participates in State Universities Retirement System, which is one of the five state pension systems. She feels her participation in the system will help her perspective as a TRS trustee.

On the executive and local level, Marcia serves teachers by participating in the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT).

She loves spending time with her three daughters (one is a teacher in O’Fallon), grandchildren, and mother, who is 81 years young. “I guess you could say my family is my hobby! When I’m not working, you’ll find me enjoying every minute I can with them,” she said. 

Post-retirement Limitations Exist for Annuitants

Annuitants will not exceed post-retirement teaching limitations if they follow these guidelines. Usually, there are no restrictions for working in a position that is not covered by TRS.

Same school year limitation. If you return to a TRS-covered position in the same school year that you last contributed to TRS, your retirement annuity will be canceled and you will be required to repay all annuity payments. The school year ends June 30.

Employment in subsequent school years. Following the school year in which you last contributed to TRS, you may be employed in a TRS-covered position for up to 120-paid days or 600-paid hours per school year and still receive a retirement annuity. However, you must wait 30 days from the effective date of your resignation before performing any post-retirement teaching for the same employer.

Consequences of breaking limitations

If you exceed the limitations during the first year following retirement, your retirement annuity will be canceled and you will be required to repay all


annuity payments. Contributions will be required on earnings for the entire period of employment.

If you violate the post-retirement employment restrictions in subsequent years, your retirement annuity will be suspended and you will return to active member status. This means you will start making contributions to TRS for the salary you earned after the limitation was exceeded. You will have to repay any annuity paid after you attain 120 work days or 600 work hours.

Reciprocal Act

If you retired under the Retirement Systems Reciprocal Act, you should contact each system for the employment limitations that apply.

Non-TRS employment


You may be employed by any college, university, private school, or out-of-state public school district after retirement without limitations. A school district may also employ you in a position not covered by TRS, such as a bus driver. 

Approval Required Before Disability Recipients Teach

If you plan to return to teaching on a limited basis as a disability recipient, you must contact us to request a Limited Return to Work Program Certification form. This form *must* be completed and returned to us prior to your return to teaching. We will acknowledge receipt of the form and confirm your eligibility.


The law allows individuals who have received TRS disability benefits for one year or more to return to teaching if their medical conditions improve, allowing

part-time work. On a limited basis, you may tutor, substitute, or part-time teach for a TRS-covered employer without loss of your disability benefit as long as your combined earnings from your teaching and your disability benefit do not exceed 100 percent of the salary rate upon which the benefit was based.

You may not teach, substitute, or tutor for any employers not covered by the Teachers' Retirement System. 



Members Seek Online Estimates

Our new online benefit estimate calculator uses information from your TRS record and information you provide to help you estimate your retirement income. From March 2 to June 13, 2007, 2,368 members received personalized benefit estimates online. To start the process, go to our secure Account Access area of our Web site at trs.illinois.gov. A user ID and password are required. 

Retiring Teacher Leaves Legacy of Inspiration

Most people can remember their favorite school teachers because they were the ones who made learning fun and who went out of their way to make all their students feel special and valued.

For generations of students who attended Wescott School in Northbrook, those teachers included Ralph Hwastecki. Mr. Hwastecki, (pronounced Wah steck key), retired in June at age 80 after spending the past 35 years teaching at the elementary school.

Several of his former students honored their former teacher by speaking at an awards ceremony held at the school on June 7 or by having letters they wrote about Mr. Hwastecki read at the event. They attributed their personal and professional success to the inspiration they received from Mr. Hwastecki, who is known for his sense of humor and strong devotion to his school and the students.

“Thirty-four years after being in your 3rd grade class, you are still one of the teachers I remember most fondly,” wrote former student Amy Stone-Iken. “Your classroom was a fascinating place — it was a catalyst for my love of science and I’m sure your influence helped me head toward a career in engineering,” Stone-Iken wrote.

“What separates a good teacher from a great teacher? I think it’s the ability to captivate the imagination of your students. And when you combine that with a true passion for the subject matter, like the way Mr. Hwastecki did, you couldn’t help but learn,” said former student Harry Maisel at the awards ceremony. Maisel,

a 1977 graduate of Wescott, said the life lessons and instruction received from Mr. Hwastecki helped mold his students into the people they are today. Maisel works in real estate sales and development in Chicago.

Teaching was a second career for Hwastecki, who spent the first part of his life working in sales for New York Twist Drill Company. He was in his 40s when the company closed its Chicago office and Hwastecki decided to become a teacher. “I enjoyed working with children and it was an opportunity to do that in education,” said Hwastecki.

Mr. Hwastecki said he has many good memories of his teaching career. “My favorite was the ‘Book Day Play,’ when each child dressed up as a book character, stood up in front of the class and recited the author and the main idea of the book.” He also recounts of how frightened some students initially were when he brought in some snakes to keep in an aquarium in his classroom. Once they spent more time around the snakes, their fear went away, Hwastecki said.

Some of Mr. Hwastecki’s former students have vivid memories of



Ralph Hwastecki with his last second grade class, spring 2007.

Photo courtesy of Jerry Daliege - Illinois News Images

all the animal specimens and live reptiles their teacher kept in his classroom. “It was a little creepy for most of us,” wrote Loren Roseman, who was in Hwastecki’s 5th grade class in 1977-78. “The snake would eat goldfish right out of your hand. For many students, this, too, was a little creepy — not me though. I thought it was cool,” Roseman said.

Wescott Principal Dr. Terri Carman said despite his age or inclement weather, Mr. Hwastecki typically took on extra duties such as providing playground supervision before school. She adds he was always willing to dress up as a character in a skit or lead the children in a cheer

to motivate them each day before school. “It shows you who he is as a person and as

a teacher...he’s made quite the commitment to the school, the students, and their families,” she said.

“What separates a good teacher from a great teacher? . . . the ability to captivate the imagination of your students. And when you combine that with a true passion for the subject matter, like the way Mr. Hwastecki did, you couldn’t help but learn.”

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Counseling at Your Service

This summer, many of you will call us or come to our offices for information.

Often, we can assist you on the phone or via e-mail and save you a trip to our offices.

However, if you need to meet with us, scheduling an appointment in advance is the best way to save time and allows us to promptly meet your needs during your visit.

An appointment with a counselor guarantees a date and time for your conference. It also gives the counselor time to review your record and prepare any information you have requested. We will also send a letter to confirm your appointment date and send a map with directions to the TRS office.

Walk-in visitors may have to wait to see a counselor because every effort is made to see scheduled visitors at the appointed time. 

Pipeline ERO Expires

On July 1, 2007, the Pipeline early retirement option (ERO) expired and now only one type of ERO exists.



Prior to July 1, 2007, eligible members who were in the “pipeline” to retire and met specific requirements could use the ERO provisions in effect before Public Act 94-0004 was enacted on June 1, 2005. The ERO created after June 1, 2005 is called Modified ERO. It applies to all members who retired after June 30, 2005 and did not qualify for Pipeline ERO. Modified ERO is the only ERO in effect.

If you are a TRS member between the ages of 55 and 60 and have at least 20 but less than 35 years of service, you may use the ERO to avoid a discounted annuity. If you do not use the ERO and you retire with less than 35 years of service, your annuity is reduced 6 percent for each year that you are under age 60.


The current Modified ERO program will be allowed to continue through at least 2012. 

New Online Videos Added

Our Web site has added three new member videos: Teachers’ Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP), Optional Service, and Reciprocal Service.



Narrated by TRS staff, our new videos are in addition to the following videos currently online: Retirement; Standard and Reversionary Annuities; Death and Survivor Benefits; and Disability Benefits.

Web videos must be viewed with RealPlayer and are provided according to the speed of your Internet access. To view TRS videos, visit our Web site at trs.illinois.gov and click on the Member Videos link in the right navigation bar. 


Legacy

(continued from page 5)

There have been a lot of cultural changes since Hwastecki began teaching; some beneficial and others, such as an increasing number of families separated by divorce, that made some of his students look to him as a father figure in addition to his role as their teacher.

He believes the expansion of educational TV programming is an ongoing cultural trend that has made a difference in the current student body. “The students are more streetwise and more knowledgeable now because they’re making more use of TV and channels such as the History Channel,” Hwastecki said.

The Chicago native has been able to use e-mail to stay in contact with his former students, some of whom are now living abroad in Australia, Japan, Korea, and Norway. He vows to continue pursuing knowledge about new technology now that he is retired. Hwastecki says he is a history buff and member of a Civil War club. He also hopes to visit the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

He’ll be joined on his travels by his wife Lois, who Hwastecki says has wanted him to retire for many years. “She’ll be happy... I truly enjoyed my teaching career. But it’s time to move over and let the younger people do the job.” 



Fall member meetings explain retirement process and benefits

Learn about the retirement process, disability and death benefits, the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program, and more at our fall meetings. TRS will host 94 statewide meetings from September to November that are designed to explain the retirement process and to provide you with information about various benefits available through TRS.

The meetings are being conducted in cooperation with regional offices of education and selected school districts. Sessions at the following locations are now being arranged. Please check our Web site, trs.illinois.gov, and look for notices this fall at your district offices to confirm the locations and time of the meeting closest to you. At press time, all meetings were scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m.



Alton November 8	Chicago Heights September 27	Elmhurst September 13	Lena September 20	New Lenox October 24	Savanna September 19
Arlington Heights October 16	Chillicothe September 26	Evanston October 23	Lincoln November 8	Newton October 17	Schaumburg October 25
Aurora November 1	Collinsville November 15	Flora October 29	Machesney Park September 25	Normal October 24	South Holland October 11
Barrington September 26	Crystal Lake November 1	Galesburg October 2	Macomb October 3	North Chicago October 23	Sparta September 26
Bartonville October 11	Danville October 18	Geneseo October 22	Marion October 9	Northbrook October 3	Springfield September 20
Belleville November 6	Decatur September 11	Geneva September 27	Mascoutah November 13	O'Fallon November 7	Sterling October 18
Bethalto November 14	Des Plaines September 18	Granite City November 14	Mattoon October 25	Oak Lawn September 18	Streator September 19
Bloomington September 11	Dixon October 2	Grayslake October 10	Metamora November 5	Oak Park October 30	Sycamore October 30
Bourbonnais November 7	Downers Grove September 25	Harrisburg October 23	Moline October 23	Olney October 16	Taylorville September 18
Cahokia November 15	Dunlap October 29	Highland Park November 6	Monmouth October 1	Peoria October 10	Tinley Park September 11
Canton October 9	DuQuion September 25	Hillsboro September 17	Morris September 12	Plainfield September 20	Troy November 13
Carbondale October 11	East Moline October 23	Jacksonville September 19	Morton October 30	Pontiac October 18	Urbana November 5
Carmi October 24	East St. Louis November 6	Jerseyville November 14	Mt. Carmel October 15	Princeton September 25	Waterloo September 27
Centralia October 16	Edwardsville November 1	Kankakee September 12	Mt. Vernon October 4	Quincy September 12	Wheaton October 4
Champaign September 12	Effingham October 30	Kewanee September 24	Murphysboro October 10	Rockford October 17	Yorkville October 4
Charleston October 24	Elgin October 2	LaSalle October 16	Naperville October 18		

Upcoming Board Meetings

Springfield Board meetings are held at the TRS office, 2815 West Washington St., Springfield.

August 9-10

Chicago

October 25-26

Springfield

December 5-7

Chicago

Stakeholder Forum, January 25

Springfield

February 21-22

Springfield

Retreat, April 9-11

TBA

May 21-23

Springfield

June 19-20 (tentative)

Springfield

Board actions can be found on our Web site, trs.illinois.gov.

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 Contact us to add your e-mail address
 to our e-mail notification list.

Web site

trs.illinois.gov

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William Orrill	Carbondale

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Address changes

To ensure that all information about your retirement benefit reaches you, please notify us each time your mailing address changes. You may call us or send us the following information in writing:

- your name and Social Security number
- former street address, city, state, and ZIP
- new street address, city, state, and ZIP
- daytime telephone number.